

PSYCHOLOGY TEACHERS UPDATE

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QUALITATIVE PSYCHOLOGY
AND RESEARCH METHODS

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PSYCHOLOGY TEACHERS UPDATE

Psychology Teachers Update is designed to give a brief overview of the main developments in the different areas of psychology. There is a proliferation of journals and research, and it is very difficult to keep abreast of the latest trends, particularly in the many and varied areas of psychology.

Each issue of Psychology Teachers Update will cover a particular topic, and summarise the main research directions and findings in the last ten to fifteen years approximately. The aim is to give teachers the feel of what is happening in that area of psychology.

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Introduction

For most of the 20th century psychology has had a "natural science envy" (Henwood and Pidgeon 1992). It was only in 1991 that the British Psychological Society (BPS) "officially" recognised the "potential value" of qualitative methods in psychology, though their use had been growing in the social sciences since the 1960s (Richardson 1996) ⁽¹⁾. The BPS report (Nicolson 1991) raised concerns, that still remain today for many people, about the "unscientific" nature of qualitative methods.

Banister et al (1994) noted that the qualitative methods could only be understood in relation to "methods in psychology which rest upon quantification". However, they did not see qualitative and quantitative methods in diametric opposition. This is a point of discussion as to whether both types of methods are compatible ⁽²⁾, or whether there are underlying philosophical differences which inhibit the use of both types of methods together (Rennie 1999) ⁽³⁾⁽⁴⁾.

Overall, Banister et al (1994) defined qualitative methods as "the interpretative study of a specified issue or problem in which the researcher is central to the sense that is made" (p2).

Two key issues come from this definition, which highlight the difference compared to quantitative methods:

i) "Interpretative" - quantitative methods based upon the principles of science and the experimental approach attempt to screen out interpretation (bias or subjectivity), and to accurately (objectively) study behaviour. Willig (2001) called this "the God trick";

ii) The role of the researcher - in quantitative research, the researcher attempts to keep themselves outside the research situation, and to concentrate upon the study. While in qualitative research, it is accepted that humans are studying humans, and it is impossible for the researcher to keep themselves from the research situation. Thus the researcher becomes central (and an asset) to the research.

These are the most general principles of qualitative research, but there are many different types of qualitative methods with differing approaches and assumptions, and not all qualitative methods are part of the "new paradigm" (Reason and Rowan 1981) ⁽⁵⁾. Table 1 lists some of the main qualitative methods used in psychology.

CORE QUALITATIVE METHODS

Case Study
Ethnography
Unstructured/Semi-structured interview
Unstructured Observation

QUALITATIVE METHODS GROWING IN POPULARITY

Action Research
Content Analysis*
Diary Method*
Discourse Analysis
Feminist Research
Focus Groups
Repertory Grid Technique*

LESSER KNOWN OR USED METHODS

Analytic Induction
Conversational Analysis
Ethnomethodology
Grounded Theory
Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)
Memory Works
Narrative Inquiry/Analysis
Protocol Analysis
Semiotic Analysis

(* These methods can be used both in qualitative and quantitative versions).

Table 1 - Different types of qualitative methods (6).

Foundations of Qualitative Research

Quantitative research is based upon the assumption :

(T)hat the social world can be studied in the same way as the natural world and that science can only deal with observable entities which can be tested directly and quantified and analysed statistically..Social order is viewed as external to research participants and value-free: the researcher is thus required to play the role of detached "objective observer". There is a belief that the knowledge produced is independent of the method used and the assumptions underpinning it..
(French and Swain 2000 p39).

Qualitative research challenges these assumptions.

THE ROLE OF INTERPRETATION

Quantification all too often fuels the fantasy of prediction and control, but qualitative research in psychology takes as its starting point an awareness of the gap between an object of study

and the way we represent it, and the way interpretation necessarily comes to fill that gap (Banister et al 1994 p3).

For Banister et al (1994), that gap between the object and representation is the issue, and quantitative methods traditionally avoid it by saying that the object and the representation are the same thing.

Woolgar (1988) talked of "methodological horrors" - three ways in which the gap manifests itself:

1. Indexicality

Research is always tied to a particular occasion or situation. Thus it is not possible to observe behaviour at point and place A, and then generalise to all times and places. What was observed at point and place A is specific to point and place A. That is not to say that the behaviour observed may not help us to understand behaviour in other times and places.

Also the concept of replicability is rejected because even the same situation may be different at two separate points in time.

Mauthner et al (1998) highlighted the problem of revisiting, a few years later, their own qualitative data as difficult because the data were collected in a specific context. The researchers themselves had changed their ideas since the original research, as well as a loss of "closeness" with the participants which was prominent at the time of data collection.

2. Inconcludability

There is no final interpretation or conclusion from the data. Understanding of the same pieces of data will change with time. Qualitative research is telling a "plausible story" (Silverman 1993) rather than establishing the truth, and the results are "always provisional" (Banister et al 1994).

3. Reflexivity

Banister et al (1994) believed this to be "the most distinctive feature of qualitative research". How an object is described will influence the perception of that object, and the subjectivity of the researcher will be central to that. Thus researcher self-reflection is crucial.

"Objectivity and subjectivity are always defined in

relation to one another, and the mistake that positivists make is to assume that the relationship is like a conceptual zero-sum game in which a diminution of one, the erasure of subjectivity, will lead to an increase in the other, the production of a fully objective account" (Banister et al 1994 p13) (7).

But what if objectivity is not possible because the subjective part of the research (ie: the researcher) cannot be removed. Rather than focusing upon how to remove the subjectivity in the research, qualitative methods accept it cannot be removed, and ask the researcher to become aware of themselves in the research (8).

The research looks outward at the research situation, and inward at who they are doing the research. Any pretence of a neutral researcher is removed. For example, in an interview, it is not only what the interviewee says, but qualitative research is aware of the interviewer-interviewee interaction such that what is reported to the interviewer is seen as a product of the situation only. This is a problem if there is a true version of the interview, but not if there is no thing as that.

Wilkinson (1988) distinguished three types of self-reflection in qualitative research:

i) Personal reflexivity - this is "about acknowledging who you are, your individuality as a researcher from initial idea to outcome" (Banister et al 1994 p150). This is the researcher using themselves as a source (Callaway 1981).

For example, Marshall (1986) admitted that "I have always chosen as research topics issues which have personal significance and which I need to explore in my own life" (p197). Marshall's main focus has been on the experiences of female managers at work (eg: Marshall 1984).

The emphasis throughout qualitative research is to maintain and develop self awareness: "If we fail to be critically aware and to know ourselves then we are in danger of undermining the validity of our work" (Banister et al 1994 p150), and producing "vanity ethnography" (Van Maanen 1988).

ii) Functional reflexivity - this is the "continuous, critical examination of the practice/process of research to reveal its assumptions, values and biases" (Wilkinson 1988 p495).

How the research develops, and the research

decisions made will be based upon the individual, and there is a need to always be aware of that fact. So "we must attend to who we are, scrutinize our history, values, assumptions and idiosyncrasies as well as our relationship with participants. Readers of our work will then have an awareness of our sense making, our personal frameworks" (Goodley et al 2002 p24).

iii) Disciplinary reflexivity - this includes reflecting upon the research method generally, and even upon psychology itself.

Quantitative methods deal with the "methodological horrors" in a number of ways: to refer to existing scientific knowledge that is unquestionable; treating the "horrors" as technical methodological problems; or avoiding the underlying philosophical problems of research (Banister et al 1994). However this attempt to avoid the gap between the object and the representation led to the "crisis" in psychology in the 1960s and 1970s (Parker 1989).

Quantitative research based on the "old paradigm" of science focuses on the technical problems of methodology, which manifests itself in terms of concepts like ecological validity, demand characteristics, and experimenter effects. Deal with these issues, and it is believed that the quantitative research will be accurate.

Is Qualitative Research Unsystematic?

Qualitative research could so easily be accused of not being systematic because of the failure to be reliable or valid. This has led to a different emphasis in qualitative research to show it is a systematic approach in its own way. Lincoln and Guse (1985) developed "parallel criteria" for qualitative research (table 2).

Merrick(1999) produced three criteria for evaluating qualitative research:

- a) Trustworthiness - the transparency of the research process;
 - b) Reflexivity;
 - c) Representation - the degree to which the research represents the participants' voices and "something" brought by the researcher. Not just "to capture the informant's voice, but to elucidate the experience" (Althiede and Johnson 1994). This could lead to an interviewee's statements as "co-authored" (Kvale 1996a).
- Potter and Wetherell (1987) also added fruitfulness.

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

Internal validity

External validity

Reliability

Objectivity

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Credibility (eg: triangulation)

Transferability
- of research findings to help understand other situations

Dependability
- the process of the research is examined as well as the product (findings)

Confirmability
- research is "internally coherent"

Table 2 - Parallel criteria for quantitative and qualitative research.

This is the ability of the research to produce new explanations.

Qualitative research makes use of triangulation which is looking at the research from multiple standpoints. Banister et al (1994) listed four types of triangulation:

i) Data triangulation - the collection of data from different participants about the same event or behaviour.

For example, in Griffin's (1986) study of young working class women joining the labour market from school, she collected data from headteachers, careers officers, and teachers as well as the women themselves.

But "Accounts from people differently positioned within the context are unlikely to fit neatly together. They do, however, highlight how experiencing and thus understanding are context bound" (Banister et al 1994 p146).

ii) Investigator triangulation - this is the use of multiple researchers, preferably from different perspectives or disciplines. Reason and Rowan (1981) argued that "valid research cannot be conducted alone", and Oakley (1985) felt that research by one person was only as "good" as "the integrity and judgement of the person who carries it out". The role of other researchers is to help overcome any "blind spots" of the main researcher.

iii) Method triangulation - the use of multiple methods to collect data.

For example, Melamed (1993) studied women's reactions to ageing through self-reflection, traditional

interviews, collaborative interviews (where the researcher confessed her feelings as well) (9), cross-cultural studies in seven countries, expert opinion, and men's views. This piece of research was done in the feminist tradition.

iv) Theoretical triangulation - here the researcher makes use of multiple theories in their research. For example, Wetherell (1986) has argued that the social psychology of gender can be improved by using feminist literary criticism. It is the use of a multi-disciplinary approach which is being emphasised here.

But triangulation may lead to a loss of the situation-specific nature of the data (Silverman 1993).

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE

Traditional scientific research is based upon the philosophical principles of realism. This is the idea that there are underlying truths about human behaviour that can be discovered by the use of the scientific methods. These truths exist irrelevant of the researcher or the research situation.

The alternative view is that all knowledge is linked to its time and place, and is socially constructed (Gergen 1985). "The terms and forms by which we achieve a understanding of the world and ourselves are social artefacts, products of historically and culturally situated interchanges among people" (Gergen 1994 p49).

So rather than science being principles that are true in all situations and places, science can be viewed as a product of Western society and thinking.

Furthermore there is no such thing as neutral science:

Research questions are structured by personal and political interests that need to be explored rather than hidden away, for it is when they are concealed that they do the most damage (Banister et al 1994 p9).

Assuming that all knowledge is socially constructed can be problematic because such a position is associated with relativism: "The worry is that if there are no objective grounds for choosing between points of view, then 'anything goes'" (Wetherell and Still 1996 p103).

Bruner (1990) disagreed. For him, it is not whether an idea or theory is correct, but whether it is appropriate to believe that idea or theory. A more pragmatic view. Thus research is not meaningless because

the absolute truth cannot be discovered, rather research is able to "do" many things including a political commitment to change for the better.

It is important to emphasise that there are varying degrees here in terms of the use of qualitative research. Some qualitative researchers will be distinctly "anti-science", whereas others will use qualitative methods to help their quantitative research without concern for the assumed social construction of knowledge.

EXPANDING THE ETHICAL CONCERNS

All psychological research, whether qualitative or quantitative, is meant to follow ethical guidelines from the British Psychological Society (BPS) in this country, or the American Psychological Association (APA) in the US. But, in practice, how much actual attention is being paid to the ethical guidelines?

Within some forms of qualitative research, it is felt that there is no excuse for "mistreating" the participants in any way. So, for example, the informed consent of the participants will be based on as fuller disclosure beforehand as possible by the researcher. There is no fear that too much information could contaminate the research with demand characteristics.

Furthermore, consent can be removed at anytime throughout the research. Informed consent is viewed as a process rather than as a one-time event (Cieurzo and Keitel 1999).

Consent can be aided by the researcher disclosing more about themselves, including in feminist research, their feelings in the interview. Such disclosure will also reduce the power inequalities in an interview.

The area where qualitative research expands the ethical issues most is in terms of accountability. Marshall (1986) argued that accountability should be linked to who the research is for - "them" (the research community), "me" (the researcher), or "us" (the participants).

Traditional quantitative research has concentrated on accountability to "them", whereas qualitative research is concerned for the "us", particularly how the participants' lives are "disrupted" by the research. Not only in terms of taking part in the research, but how the final report represents the participants, and what they can learn from the research findings (eg: "consciousness-raising").

Fine (1994) urged care when researchers say: "...I can talk about you better than you speak about yourself.. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back

to you in a new way" (p70), and act as "the colonizer".

OTHER FOUNDATIONS OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

1. Purposeful value-based inquiry

Hoshmand (1999) believed that qualitative methods are used to study under-researched problems, and to "give voice" to minority groups in society. In fact, she argued that all qualitative research is a form of action research.

2. Study of natural events and behaviour

It goes without saying that qualitative methods are based upon studying individuals in their natural environments. To study individuals through the experiment would tell us nothing other than how individuals behave in experiments.

3. Focus upon the whole

The event or behaviour is studied as a whole and in its context. All meaning is lost by reducing behaviour to specific actions or scores.

Core Qualitative Methods

UNSTRUCTURED OBSERVATION

Observation can be used as a quantitative method (eg: structured or systematic observations) as well as a qualitative method. Unstructured observation looks more widely at the whole situation being observed, and at many different things compared to the focus on counting specific observed behaviours in structured observation. Unstructured observation could be used at the beginning of a research project to gain ideas for later quantitative research.

Banister et al (1994) recommended a number of steps to aid in unstructured observations, and these show what is different about observation as a qualitative method:

- i) Describe the context - details of the whole situation being observed including the specifics of the time and date;
- ii) Describe the participants - details of the whole of the individuals being observed not just their specific behaviours;
- iii) Describe who the observer is - this is the reflexivity of the method;
- iv) Describe all the actions of the participants;
- v) Interpret the situation - there is no question of the true conclusion from the observation because of the next heading;
- vi) Consider alternative interpretations of the situation;
- vii) Explore your feelings in being an observer - development of the reflexivity.

EXAMPLE OF UNSTRUCTURED OBSERVATION: Scheflen (1964)

Scheflen believes that non-verbal behaviour is a form of language. This is a study of body movements employed by therapists and patients during consultations.

The "points" (small movements like head turns), "positions" (shifts in body posture), and "presentations" (eg: walking around) can be seen to mirror the conversation during the therapy session.

For example, the patient avoiding the gaze of the therapist when painful topics are being discussed. In

psychoanalysis, non-verbal behaviours may also be used in the interpretation process by the analyst.

ETHNOGRAPHY

More commonly used in sociology, ethnography is an extended version of participant observation, where the researcher is actively involved in the research environment. The aim is to discover what it is like to be the participants. Technically it is multi-method collecting data in many forms, including observations, interviews, and from documents.

Most importantly, behaviour can only be understood as embedded in the social context. The researcher becomes part of that social context, and this is used within the study rather than attempting to minimise it (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983).

For Reason and Rowan (1981), this method produces data that are the complete opposite of the "dead knowledge" of experiments. The emphasis is upon gaining "a closeness to how people actually conduct their lives" (Banister et al 1994 p37).

The identity of the researcher is usually known to the participants, whereas with participant observation, it is hidden as a rule.

EXAMPLE OF ETHNOGRAPHY 1: Maye Taylor (Banister et al 1994)

Taylor spent 100 hours with West Ham United football fans in the season 1992-3 travelling and watching away games. Among other things, she noted the limited number of female fans, and the specific way the male fans acted towards them:

On one occasion the only women's lavatory for visiting supporters was out of order, so a male lavatory was commandeered by two of the older men and given over to "the ladies", and they stood guard over it (p44).

Taylor reported the fans as like a "very large extended family", and quite different to the negative media portrayals of the time. This was part of the aim of the research to gain a clearer picture of the participants compared to media portrayals or stereotypes: "viewed and portrayed as amongst the most violent, racist and sexist of all football supporters" (p41). Thus the process of "becoming" a West Ham United supporter.

Her identity as researcher was known to a limited few, and summed up by one fan as "the clever bird who reads books".

EXAMPLE OF ETHNOGRAPHY 2: Hinshelwood (1987)

This is the application of psychodynamic principles to understanding group behaviour. It is based on the observations of staff working in a therapeutic community with clients with mental health difficulties.

One particular example focuses on a potentially difficult staff meeting. The staff are drinking coffee before the meeting and there is no milk. One member of staff has to get the milk from the kitchen staff. On returning the staff member starts to complain about the kitchen staff, and this then became the focus of the whole group.

Hinshelwood sees this as the defence mechanism of projection by the group. The staff group dealt with their problems by focusing on what was wrong in another group; ie: the kitchen staff.

EXAMPLE OF ETHNOGRAPHY 3: Jodelet (1991)

This book is based upon the work in a French village called Ainey-Le-Chateau. There is a history of individuals with mental illness living as lodgers with families in the village.

Jodelet used a number of methods technically, but, in the main, she lived in the village for a while. What she discovered was the specific attitudes (or social representations) of villagers to the lodgers.

For example, the concepts of cleanliness and contamination were very important. Jodelet was able to show a complex set of representations in the village about insanity and its origins.

The villagers divided the lodgers into five types: "the innocent", "the nutter", "the epileptic", "the crackpot", and "the headcase". The villagers felt that the last two categories were dangerous, and caused them anxiety.

UNSTRUCTURED/SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

An interview is the best method to discover how the participant feels and thinks in their own words. The unstructured interview using open-ended questions allows the participants to fully describe themselves. But the unstructured interview has a deeper philosophical basis than just letting the interviewee talk more than in a

structured interview. Banister et al (1994) distinguished four approaches:

i) Ethnographic interviewing - here "there is a clear role demarcation between researcher and researched in determining the research topic and outcome" (p52);

ii) "New paradigm" interviewing - the "research is viewed as a collaborative enterprise which not only involves the full participation of the interviewees but also incurs responsibility on the part of the researcher to be accountable to, and in some cases to conduct research agendas according to the demands of the participants" (p53);

iii) Feminist interviewing - power, both within the interview situation and generally in society, is at the heart of feminist methods. Thus feminist interviewing attempts to involve the participant in every aspect of the interview process, even the use of the research findings;

iv) Post-modernist or post-structuralist interviewing - the interviewee may not share the research goals of the interviewer, and thus there will be different interpretations of the interview situation. In other words, it is not just about asking and answering questions, but the underlying meanings and interpretations behind that process.

For example, men interviewed by a female researcher about sharing housework will answer based upon the meanings of social identities associated with certain answers (eg: "lazy slob" who doesn't help; "effeminate" if help too much). The questions could be "read" as a challenge or criticism, not necessarily as ways of finding facts (Willig 2001).

The post-modernist or post-structuralist view is that meanings are fluid and changing, even within the interview between start and finish.

All four approaches to interviewing agree that what the interviewee says is not the truth in an objective sense. What is said is a product of the research situation, not necessarily that the interviewee is giving false information, but that they are giving, say, a "public account". The interviewee is trying to make sense of the interview situation (usually with a stranger who does not volunteer information about themselves), and of themselves, as they give their replies to the questions.

"For instance, having been asked about domestic violence earlier on, a participant may take care to distance himself from any association with such practices in his responses to later questions" (Willig 2001 p89).

Unstructured interviews go beyond the issue of misunderstanding the wording of the questions (threat to validity) or the interviewer asking the questions differently (threat to reliability), which are concerns of structured questionnaires and interviews.

This type of method requires a full transcript of the interview, partly to help in analysis of the themes of the interview, but also to allow a reader to make their interpretations because the actual interviewer/researcher's interpretation is only one of many possible understandings of the interview.

There are different types of thematic analysis that can be performed on the interview, and Kvale (1996b) listed five different ways:

- i) Condensation - the interview is reduced to the key elements;

- ii) Categorisation - the main themes are identified and named, and the interview is condensed into these;

- iii) Narrative structuring - the interview is re-arranged to bring out the coherent meaning;

- iv) Interpretation - this form of analysis looks for deeper meanings in the interview (as with discourse analysis);

- v) Ad hoc methods - a combination of any of the above techniques.

EXAMPLE OF UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEW: Scott (1999)

This research is based on unstructured interviews with women suffering from Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) (formerly known as "multiple personalities").

The open ended format allowed the researcher to explore the individual's narratives of their fragmented self ("not-I-ness"). Scott felt that the "multiple self" helped the individual to deal with two realities: their experience of childhood sexual abuse, and the fact that this experience was denied.

Qualitative Methods Growing in Popularity

ACTION RESEARCH

Goodley and Parker (2000) argued, from a position of critical psychology, that psychology should move from academic argument (theory) into practice, but at the same time by interlinking both theory and practice. They called this the realm of "praxis". Action research allows this process.

Action research is seen as originating in the work of Kurt Lewin (1946) ⁽¹⁰⁾, who aimed to change things and see the effect. It can be said that many research methods, including experiments, change things and see the effect, but action research is focused more on the benefits of the change than the exact effects. The experiment traditionally is concerned with the exact effects of the change.

The emphasis is on the benefits of the change to the individuals, group or community being studied. It is a form of "consciousness-raising" or "conscientization" (Friere 1972) for those being studied. The task is not only to study the world but to change it. However, Billig (1976) noted that action research can be used to subordinate marginal groups by defusing debate rather than empowering them.

More formally, action research can be defined as "the study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it" (Elliott 1980). While Cohen and Manion (1980) emphasised the fluid nature of the research: "a step-by-step process is constantly monitored... so that the ensuing feedback may be translated into modifications, adjustments, directional changes, redefinitions as necessary" (p47).

Banister et al (1994) described action research as where "an existing state of affairs is seen as problematic, it is identified, named and described in an appropriate way, attempts are made to change it and these attempts are monitored, and so on" (p113).

Zuber-Skerritt (1992) noted the key characteristics of action research as:

- i) The research is practical and applied;
- ii) The participation and collaboration by those being studied. The researcher's opinion is one of many;
- iii) Thus the participants are liberated from the traditional "participant role".

Reinharz (1992) defined five types of action research or "action-in-research":

i) Action research - "action and evaluation proceed separately but simultaneously": for example, Hanmer and Saunders' (1984) study of violence against women, which aimed to develop self-help and support groups for women. The information gained from interviews was feedback to the community to help improve services.

ii) Participatory ⁽¹¹⁾ or collaborative research - this is distinguished by the fact that the people being studied make the decisions about the design of the study. Feminist participatory research aims to remove any distinction between the researcher and the researched. A good example of this type of participatory research is a project to train women on low income to research their own economic circumstances in order to change them (Lather 1988).

iii) Prevalence and needs assessment - rather than collecting data from surveys about individual needs and then setting up projects to deal with the needs, this type of action research mobilises "people to set up resources and organisations to respond to the needs as they are being identified, measured and redefined" (Banister et al 1994 p111).

iv) Evaluation research - this type of research is about evaluating the effectiveness of different types of action in dealing with individual needs.

v) Demystification - this is research that is truly "consciousness-raising" with the view that the act of gaining knowledge produces the potential for change. A number of women's health projects have been based upon this. By helping women to become more knowledgeable about their bodies, it challenges the powerlessness of women in relation to male medical experts (eg: Boston Women's Health Collective 1984).

EXAMPLE OF ACTION RESEARCH: Holland (1996)

This reading is about a project with women in west London, specifically aimed at giving them an alternative to psychotropic drugs.

For example, women encouraging women to talk about their past and problems ("her-story"). Part of the "Women's Action for Mental Health" (WAMH), this project led to a "centre for women's emotional wellbeing" called "The Bridge".

Disability Action Research

Other names used for action research include emancipatory research (eg: "People First" groups which aim to educate the public about the rights of individuals with learning disabilities: Goodley and Parker 2000).

Disability research is one of the main areas to embrace this type of approach. Oliver made the point, in the early 1990s, that "Disabled people have come to see research as a violation of their experiences, as irrelevant to their needs and as failing to improve their material circumstances and quality of life" (1992 p106).

Traditional research on disability is challenged as implicitly oppressive. French (1994) quoted an example of a questionnaire entitled "You and Your Diabetes", which contained thirty-two questions full of tragic words and phrases like: "Do you wish that you had never been born?"

Thus, the ultimate version of the tragedy model, as conveyed within this research, is that physical death is better than the social death of disability. The agenda within the research is that of the researchers, not the concerns of disabled people. For instance, the causes of any anger are clearly conceived in terms of the person's responsibility to impairment, not the barriers faced within a disabling society.. (French and Swain 2000 p36).

French and Swain (2000) showed that disability research has progressed to use qualitative methods to reflect and explore the views and experiences of the participants. This is sometimes called giving the participants "a right to voice": "There is a commitment to seeing 'through the eyes' of research participants and a belief that social behaviour cannot be grasped until the researcher has understood the symbolic world of the research participants" (p39).

More than that, both the researcher and the individual with a disability can learn from each other. Zarb (1992) distinguished this as participatory research, while emancipatory research is where the disabled people are controlling the research.

Specifically in relation to research with adults with learning disabilities, Kagan and Burton (2000) talked about using "prefigurative action research" "which emphasises the relationship between action research and the creation of alternatives to the existing social order" (p73). Examples of this type of research include the BLISS project in Manchester to understand and address the separation between adults with learning disabilities and the rest of society, particularly in terms of leisure pursuits (Kagan 1986), or, generally, the development of

a Residents' Association on a housing estate "on the edge of a Northern town" (Kagan and Burton 2000). Both projects were partnerships between researchers and participants.

This type of partnership produces what Giddens (1987) called "double hermeneutics":

(T)he researcher's immersion in with the subjects under investigation, to the point whereby, the researcher knows enough about the subject's subculture to be able to function as part of that subculture...During the process, there is a two-way interchange of meanings and understanding and exchange of languages: The technical language of the social sciences and lay language of the subjects (Lisle 2000 p124).

Then reflexivity adds another layer to this process to give "doubly double hermeneutics" (Lisle 2000).

Action Research Around the World

Outside the West and its use of psychology, action research is seen as part of social change for the poor. This type of psychology is very political in its aims of justice and democracy. For example, the idea of "solidarity-based economy" to help individuals in extreme poverty to improve their circumstances.

Estrada and Botero (2000) reported such a project in Santa Fe de Bogota, Columbia with "popular women". The participatory action research used was both studying the social problems, and mutually enriching the lives of the participants. These two aims were intricately woven together.

The study, using semi-structured interviews and observations, lasted two years, and involved fortnightly visits to "Life Creations", where seven women worked. "Life Creations" was an "economic solidarity-based enterprise" which the women had formed themselves to embroider baby's clothes. In other words, a small business run by the women themselves.

The aim of the research was to understand the "self-narrative" of the women before and since forming "Life Creations". Not only did the researchers make sense of the women's views of themselves, but the research helped the women make more sense of it. Furthermore, the research publicises such projects as "cultural resistance", and the life improvements for the individuals involved.

This type of research with a high degree of emphasis on political aims is so far from traditional scientific research. The researchers (both women) shared in the women's experiences and successes, and were "cheering" at their life improvements. This is nothing like, what Goodley and Parker (2000) called, "the crassest positivism, in which you steadily accumulate what you have measured into a corpus of 'facts' about human beings" (p3).

FEMINIST RESEARCH

Whether there is such a thing as a different type of methodology that can be called "feminist methodology" is open to debate, and as to whether such a method is inevitably qualitative ⁽¹²⁾. Feminist research may be how qualitative methods are used, in terms of issues of power, subjectivity, and political commitment (Banister et al 1994). A side issue is whether men can do feminist research ⁽¹³⁾.

If feminist research is more of a way of using other methods, then there are a number of versions of this (Banister et al 1994):

a) "Feminist empiricist" (Harding 1987) - research which corrects the imbalance of studies of men and male experience as universal;

b) "Separatist" - the emphasis on women's experiences as primary in their own terms rather than as an add on to already existing models;

c) "Feminist relativist" (Abbot and Wallace 1990) - this challenges attempts to find "grand theories" in psychology, and is part of the general post-modern move to do that.

More relevant to there being such a thing as feminist research is the attempt to establish its characteristics:

i) The most important is the focus upon the research relationships.

For example, Oakley (1981) talked of friendships developing with the women she interviewed as part of her housework study (Oakley 1974, 1979). Feminist research could also mean having the participants help interpret the data (Maher 1999).

ii) There is the challenge to science which ignores the link between knowledge and power.

While feminist research is "passionate inquiry" (Raymond 1986) committed to challenging power inequalities in research and in society, most particularly related to gender. Some writers have talked of a specific feminist epistemology (14).

There is concern about "appropriation" where "researchers take subjects' stories and may share them without permission or with an audience to whom subjects have tenuous links" (Maher 1999 p189). Thus the researcher should be accountable and responsible for what they say.

iii) As with all qualitative research, there is an emphasis on reflexivity by the researcher, particularly as the researcher will usually be an academic (feminist).

EXAMPLE OF FEMINIST RESEARCH: Maher (1999)

Maher reported the details of interviews with nine US lesbian women about their experiences of therapy. The author said the participants:

(R)eviewed, commented on, and approved their transcripts, codes I suggested representing their ideas, the main emergent themes, and the final manuscripts. I interpreted the themes from the codes. I was careful to notice and reflect on my coding, theme development, and theory building to analyse my assumptions and maintain open-mindedness about what "representing their experience" may come to mean (p191).

Therapy was found to be supportive or unsupportive for the women. The latter type was because of therapists who marginalised, suppressed, or pathologised lesbian experience.

The participants benefited from the interviews, for example, in terms of putting their experiences into words, and the power of telling their stories.

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Discourse analysis is probably the qualitative method that has grown in use most in recent years. It is uppermost in the "turn to language" in psychology (or what Harre (1995) called the "second cognitive revolution"). It "treats the social world as a text, or rather as a system of texts which can be systematically 'read' by the researcher to lay open the psychological

processes that lie within them.." (Banister et al 1994 p92). The assumption that social understanding is made up of discourses gives discourse analysis its meaning, and these discourses are "carried" in language.

Role of Language

Language "exists as a domain of social action, of communication and culture, whose relations to the external world of event, and to the internal world of cognitions, are a function of the social and communicative actions talk is designed to do" (Edwards et al 1992 p442).

Wetherell and Maybin (1996) gave three features of language use which challenged the assumption that language is neutral:

i) Language has an "action orientation" - utterances state information, and perform an action. In an argument, individuals are not just stating opposite facts, but are using language to justify their position and undermine the other's. Individuals are doing something with our utterances.

ii) Language is part of the social world - rather than language simply telling us about the social world; it is a "constitutive part of those actions, events and situations" (p244).

iii) Indexical property of discourse - all language is defined by the context of its use.

This method is the one most associated with the relativist foundations of qualitative research. It is not possible to talk about facts in the social world, but rather the social world is made up of competing discourses. But the "discourses are not really hidden away awaiting discovery; they are indeed produced through analysis.." (Banister et al 1994 p104).

The whole emphasis is away from language as referring to objects "out there" to the idea that language is about building the social reality. The same event can be described in a number of different ways. It is always possible to see how the choice of words can influence the whole understanding of an event. For example, during a news report, the use of words like "murdered", "killed", "slaughtered" - all set the context for understanding the perpetrators as good or bad. Taken a step further, with language the individual is also defining themselves.

Interactions involving language are negotiations where the participants are using their language carefully to establish the meaning of the situation (for example, to show that they are blameless in an argument), and consequently to set the meaning of themselves. This is called the "double property of talk" (Wetherell and Maybin 1996).

Discourse Analysis

The use of discourse analysis in psychology has its origins in a number of other disciplines including the sociology of knowledge, French post-structuralism (eg: Foucault 1969), and the ethogenic approach in sociology (eg: Harre 1979).

Discourse analysis is thus understood in different ways in different disciplines - from method to analysis language to theory. The term "discourse" can also mean different things - sometimes a word for language, others "a linguistic object that can be counted and described" (Potter 2004). Generally, though, theory and method are intertwined (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002; Phillips and Jorgensen 2002) (15).

Discourses fulfil a number of functions:

- i) At an interpersonal level, they are used to explain and attribute causes of behaviour;
- ii) They have a "political" function of setting out norms and standards against which behaviour is judged;
- iii) Discourses maintain differences between categories of people by making the similarities between these categories invisible and the difference visible.

It is possible to see discourses at work if we take the example of a rise in water levels leading to a flood. How this event is explained will make use of different discourses, including "meteorological discourse" (unusually heavy rain), "greenhouse effect discourse" (changing global climate), "political mismanagement discourse" (failure to build flood defences), or "God's anger discourse" (punishment for sins) (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002). Which discourse(s) used makes sense of the event, and of the individual themselves.

The aim of discourse analysis is to study the entire discourse - "what is said, in what way, by whom and for what purpose" (Hogg and Vaughan 1995 p509).

Wetherell and Potter (1992) believe that discourse analysis focuses on the "activities of justification,

rationalization, categorization, attribution, making sense, naming, blaming and identifying" which are "quintessential psychological activities" (p2).

Potter and Wetherell (1987) have shown that the way individuals construct their arguments can be used to show the underlying social assumptions. This is the focus on rhetoric.

Discourse analysis has been used in other disciplines before its arrival in psychology, and is a development on the technique of content analysis. It is based on the "description of the recurrently used words, phrases and linguistic devices which categorise and reproduce the social world" (Parker 1992 p83).

Potter and Wetherell (1995) highlighted six central themes with the use of discourse analysis.

i) Practices and resources - the aim is to look at "what people do with their talk and writing" (p81) (known as discourse practices), and the resources used to achieve this aim (the categories and interpretative repertoires used).

ii) Construction and description - this is the study of "how people assemble (versions of) the world in the course of their interactions" (p81).

iii) Content - this is the focus on what is said.

iv) Rhetoric - within discourse are inbuilt "argumentative organisations"; ie: what is said is in reference to an imaginary counter-argument.

v) Stake and accountability - within discourse analysis, people are treated as having an interest (stake) in their actions. In practice, there are no "objective" statements.

vi) Cognition in action - it is more important to study what is actually said rather than what may be individual's cognitive attitudes.

EXAMPLE OF DISCOURSE ANALYSIS 1: Potter and Wetherell (1995)

This research analysed interviews with white New Zealanders about their views of the Maoris. Two main views of "Maori culture" were highlighted. They are what the authors call "culture-as-heritage" and "culture-as-therapy". The first type sees the "Maori culture" as "something to be preserved and treasured" (p89). Thus the

aim is to "freeze" the group in the past, and invalidate the contemporary situation.

The second type sees "Maori culture" as a psychological need. For example, Maoris have created their own problems by not being "fully rooted" in their culture. Both views are used to disempower the Maoris. The highlighting of such processes is an important part of discourse analysis.

EXAMPLE OF DISCOURSE ANALYSIS 2: Wiggins, Potter & Wildsmith (2001)

Discourse analysis was performed on a naturalistic study of eating practices. The interest was to see how the construction of eating practices (ie: the language used to talk about food) can have a role in eating disorders.

Fifteen hours of conversation at family mealtimes were recorded over a seven-day period with three families. The families all had adolescent daughters.

One theme in particular that emerged was the amount that is normal for teenage adolescent females to eat in a day. This was always defined in comparison to others, and the "idea of being held accountable for what one eats is an important aspect of interaction, particularly in relation to body image and the 'thin ideal'" (p12).

The reading of the text(s) of the social world in discourse analysis will vary depending upon the assumptions that the researcher makes about language or discourses. This has led to a number of different types of discourse analysis ⁽¹⁶⁾:

In the mid-1980s it was possible to find different books called "Discourse Analysis" with almost no overlap in subject matter; the situation at the start of the 2000s is, if anything, even more fragmented (Potter 2004 p607) ⁽¹⁷⁾.

Discursive Psychology

This is a particular type of social constructionist approach ⁽¹⁸⁾ in psychology, which "attempts to look at how events are constructed in the social and cultural arena along with the psychological implications for the study of people's evaluations and representations" (Potter 1996a p150). The focus is upon the negotiation of meaning in conversations, rather than language as a reflection of thoughts.

This version of discourse analysis is based on Potter and Wetherell (1987) and Edwards and Potter (1992)

("Discursive Action Model"), and the tradition of ethnomethodology and conversational analysis (19).

Discursive psychology is based on three principles (Potter 1996):

a) Construction - the individual's version of the world is constructed through practical interactions as if it is independent of the individual;

b) Action - speaking is seen as action, and this is what is studied, not thought;

c) Rhetoric - talk is "used" to make a point, to counter a real or imagined argument. Whatever is said always has the alternative in mind.

However, if what people say is too obviously countering another view, and is seen as an attempt to influence, it will be discounted as a "stake". An individual holds a particular attitude because it is to their interest. For example, company managers believe that unions hinder progress. The reaction is very much - "they would say that, wouldn't they?"

This is obviously important in advertising. If individuals are to be persuaded to buy certain products, they must not immediately switch off because of "stake". One way around this problem is "stake inoculation". This is a technique to "prevent a claim being undermined as a product of stake" (Potter 1996a p165).

For example, a celebrity endorsing a product is portrayed as initially sceptical about the product's claims, and then is won over. The point of the initial scepticism is to counter the argument - "you would say that you're being paid to say so" of the celebrity.

EXAMPLE OF DISCOURSE ANALYSIS 3: Dickerson (1998)

Based upon 50 UK political interviews between March 1992 and May 1996, this research looked at the use of "national interest" to justify politician's intentions. This process involves "dilemmas of stake" (Potter 1996c) "as people struggle to establish their accounts as factual and stable representations of the world and to deconstruct other accounts as the product of personal or group interests" (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002 p113).

One way of justifying is to back up an intention or opinion with something that cannot be refuted. In this case, a politician saying "I did it for the nation" is hard to argue against.

Dickerson found a number of uses of the "national

interest" in the interviews:

i) To exonerate the speaker - eg: Alan Clark (Conservative Defence Minister) is accused of the illegal supply of weapons to Iraq in 1996: "...there's never any suggestion in the whole of that report that anybody was doing this for reasons other than their own interpretation of what was right for the country" (p481). Clark does not deny the accusation, but explains the "noble" reason why he may have done it.

ii) To accomplish blame - eg: Tony Blair (Labour opposition leader) demanding an election in January 1996 and accusing the Conservative Government of being "in a state of disintegration": "...I seriously wonder how the country is going to be governed properly" (p483). His comments can easily be seen as vested interest, so Blair couches his criticisms in terms of the "national interest". Edwards and Potter (1992) called this "indirect blaming"; ie: his criticisms are based upon a "worthy" cause.

iii) To show the courageous politician - eg: John Major (Conservative Prime Minister) defending poor local election results in 1995: "To those who suggest as some have done that the Conservative party has its back to the wall I would simply say we will do precisely what the British nation has always done.. and that is turn round and fight for the things it believes in" (pp484-485). The speaker is trying to show that their unpopularity is not due to individual motives at work but those of a higher value. The "courageous politician" is fighting their corner in the same way as the nation has historically.

iv) To sidestep criticism - eg: an opposition Labour politician is accused in 1996 of having the same policies as the Conservatives on Europe and Northern Ireland: "...I don't think we are overdoing it (supporting the Government) what we are doing is trying to put the interests of the country first.." (p487).

v) Stake inoculation - John Major (Conservative Prime Minister) in 1994 showing an awareness of the unpopularity of his decisions makes it appear that the decisions are for reasons other than personal ones. He has "discounted" the argument of personal interest: "...but because we've taken those unpopular decisions of course it reflects upon the Government's standing in the short term" (p489).

Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (Michel Foucault)

The origins of this approach are post-structuralist ideas, and can be seen in Henriques et al (1984; 1998), and Foucault (1990) (20).

This approach is concerned with "what kinds of objects and subjects are constructed through discourses and what kinds of ways-of-being these objects and subjects make available to people", whereas discursive psychology is about "how people use discursive resources in order to achieve interpersonal objectives in social interaction" (Willig 2001 p91). Simply there is more emphasis on language in constructing the self (subjectivity) through "identity or subject positions" and "positioning" in Foucauldian discourse analysis.

Table 3 highlights the differences between the two approaches to discourse analysis (21)(22).

DISCURSIVE PSYCHOLOGY ANALYSIS	FOUCAULDIAN DISCOURSE
FOCUS	
How language is used as an action in social interaction that are individuals	What are discourses available to help define themselves and their social worlds
AUTONOMY	
Individual is able to use language in social based interactions (greater autonomy)	Limited number of available to individuals on discourses that (limited autonomy)

Table 3 - Main difference between discursive psychology and Foucauldian discourse analysis.

Foucault (1969) emphasised the history of a particular discourse (23), and the role of power relations. In terms of the history, how did we get to this point in time where a certain discourse exists with its particular meaning.

Identity Positions

A very important aspect of language as constructing the individual is the concept of "identity positions" (Harre and Van Langenhove 1991). These are similar to social roles, but more dynamic and changing. When an individual is involved in interaction, there are possible locations ("positions") that are being taken - first order, second order, and third order.

- EG (1) A says "get my tea"
B replies "no, I'm not your servant"
- (2) Later B tells C "A is always demanding things"

What is important is not just what is said, but the implicit meanings involved.

(1) A's statement is first order positioning; they are establishing the social situation; ie: that they believe they have the right to demand their tea. There is an implicit power inequality within the interaction. But B's response is questioning this right; ie: B is attempting to position A as a person without that right to demand (second order positioning).

(2) B's telling of the event to another is third order positioning; ie: A is repositioned as demanding and thoughtless.

This also means that meanings can be contested between speakers as an interaction proceeds (Cooper and Kaye 2002).

During life, particularly within the family situations, many positions are repeated, and individuals come to "invest" in certain positions (Holloway 1984). Individuals will also have an "interpretative repertoire": "The sum of different discourses, and the ways that they can be combined and mixed together, which the individual has at their disposal to construct subject positions" (Cooper and Kaye 2002 p101).

Burr (1995) saw "interpretative repertoires" like moves of a ballet dancer: a finite number available that are put together in different ways.

Lesser Known or Used Qualitative Methods in Psychology

GROUNDING THEORY

Grounding theory has its origin in sociology in the work of Glaser and Strauss (1967). The aim is to develop a specific theory from the data collected. The theory will be particular to the context rather than pre-existing. The idea of entering a research situation with no prior theoretical pre-conceptions is very different to other methods which begin their research from a specific theoretical position.

Gherardi and Turner (1987) called this type of research, "discovery" - "research in which the conclusions are not known before the investigations are carried out" - as opposed to "verification" (where "theory serves as a framework to guide verification").

Grounding theory focuses upon "categories of meaning" in the data, which are defined as the research goes along, and then a theory is developed from them.

The coding process is based upon a number of technical aspects including constant comparative analysis, negative case analysis, and theoretical saturation (Willig 2001). The data used can be collected from other qualitative methods like interviewing or observation.

Within sociology, Grounding Theory is used by those interested in how human actors negotiate and manage social situations, and how these combine to produce social processes.

Willig (2001) argued that Grounding Theory is mainly descriptive, and of limited use in psychology, other than for the study of social psychological processes.

EXAMPLE OF GROUNDING THEORY: Morse (1992)

This research was based upon interviews with nurses about the gifts they received from patients. Analysis of the interview transcripts produced "categories of meaning" like "negotiating the relationship" and "mutual relationships" (which had sub-categories). The research began from the observation of gift-giving and widened to the study of nurse-patient relationships along with a theory for the behaviour.

ETHNOMETHODOLOGY

This method is more commonly used in sociology. The term "ethnomethodology" was first coined by Harold Garfinkel in 1967 for the study of methods used by individuals to construct and give meaning to the social world. It is associated in sociology with the approach of phenomenology (eg: Husserl 1931).

The emphasis in phenomenology in sociology is upon the meanings of the individual in the social world rather than to explain the social world itself as in many other sociological approaches. Individuals experience the world through their senses and classify these experiences into "phenomena" (common patterns or characteristics). Thus it is not about objective reality, but how the individual has "bracketed" reality (an "interpretive reality") (Brewer 2004).

However, the process of classification is not completely individual, but shared by members of society through language. Schutz (1932/1972) called the classifications, "typifications" (varying from objects like "chairs" to concepts like "justice"). The typifications together produce the "common-sense knowledge" of the community or society.

Shared knowledge gives the illusion of stability and order in society. Though common-sense knowledge changes with social interactions, and is unique to each individual: "We expect others to know what we are talking about, to see what we are seeing. But we also take it for granted that the ways we are involved in this common world are, at least in some respects, particular to use" (Cuff et al 1990 p169).

Ethnomethodology is interested in studying such knowledge. It is studying "how members of society go about the task of seeing, describing, and explaining order in the world in which they live" (Zimmerman and Weider 1971).

The aim is:

(To) analyse the methods, or procedures, that people use for conducting the different affairs that they accomplish in their daily lives.
Ethnomethodology is the analysis of the ordinary methods that people use to realise their ordinary actions (Coulon 1995 p1).

For ethnomethodologists, the researcher is using this process in the same way as an ordinary person in society. Thus, the job of the researcher is to understand and describe how individuals make sense of the world ,

not what causes social processes and behaviour. It is also certainly not about giving "definitive descriptions" of the social world (Brewer 2002).

A key idea within ethnomethodology is the "local production of social order". This is the idea that social life is the product of an individual's understanding of the situation, which can accept some features as "normal" (eg: roles). But, at the same time, interactions are ongoing and changeable. Social situations are both the product and the process of the actors involved. Individuals can both perceive the social situation as constraining them as well as being free to behave differently. It is not about right or wrong interpretations, but how individuals perceive and construct the situation.

CONVERSATIONAL ANALYSIS (CA)

Conversational analysis focuses upon the interaction between individuals. Bryman (2001) defined it as: "Fine-grained analysis of talk as it occurs in interaction in naturally occurring situations" (p355). The analysis is concerned with the underlying structure of talk in interaction, and the achievement of order through interaction. The aim is different to that of discourse analysis.

CA is the study of the detail of talk, and how individuals make sense of the world through conversation. Conversations are recorded and transcribed to show the detailed process of social interactions, and particularly that talk is specific to the occasion, co-participant, and topic of discussion. "Essentially, conversation analysis aims to show how meanings and representations in discourse are produced through the structures, procedures and practices of talk" (Forrester 1999 p38).

The achievement of CA is:

(T)o demonstrate in detailed and elegant ways how conversational organisation involves powerful general structures which are highly "context sensitive"; in and through these structures conversationalists build conversations which are not, in themselves, general, but particular and specific to their local social circumstances (Cuff et al 1990 p186).

Topics of interest in conversation include turn-taking (eg: Sack et al 1974), closing conversations, introducing topics, asking questions, and making

requests.

EXAMPLE OF CONVERSATIONAL ANALYSIS: Schegloff (1972)

1A: Are you coming tonight?
1B: Can I bring a guest?
2A: Sure
2B: I'll be there.

This brief interaction shows how much information is transmitted in such a situation, both explicitly and implicitly. For example, 1A is both a factual question (explicit meaning) and an invitation (implicit meaning). 1B is a question which is a conditional response to 1A.

Technically, 1B and 2A are known as an "insertion sequence" (Cuff et al 1990), which temporarily suspends the question of 1A. The whole interaction is both specific to what is said, but also general in terms of normal behaviour.

1B could also be seen as a way to deal with the ambiguity of 1A's meaning. 1A could be asking for a date. While 2A confirms the social acceptability of 1B, and removes any ambiguity.

NARRATIVE INQUIRY/ANALYSIS

This method is based upon the assumption that experience and meaning come from storytelling. Storytelling here means autobiography, biography, and oral history. It is the telling and retelling of events to others, and thus to give meaning to ourselves. Narrative inquiry seeks to understand the "personalised insights into social worlds" (Goodley et al 2002).

MEMORY WORK

Based on the work of Frigga Haug (1987) in Germany, Memory Work uses the memories of the researcher themselves. The aim is to understand the social construction of the individual identity. In reality, it is a group memory exercise with the sharing of ideas, and analysis of what is recalled (Willig 2001).

Haug (1987) used this method with a group of women who traced their memories of how their bodies became sexualised. This is similar to the work on discursive theories of remembering (eg: joint recall of the film "ET" by students; Edwards and Middleton 1986).

INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS (IPA)

In psychology, the phenomenological approach tries to study human awareness as it is experienced (Stevens 1996). Each individual's experience is unique, and their language is a reflection of the deeper psychological reality (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002).

Thus the underlying assumption of IPA is that it is impossible to fully understand the life experience of the studied individual even if they are telling the researcher about their feelings in their own words. Those own words are used in "a process of interpretative engagement" (Smith 1997).

Interpretation here does not mean finding hidden or underlying meanings in the participant's words, but the researcher is saying "I think the participant means this". Usually based on unstructured interviews or diaries, the researcher looks for themes in what the participant is saying about their experiences.

This method has some popularity in health psychology in understanding individual's experience of illness and pain. For example, Osborn and Smith (1998) used IPA to study nine female patients' experience of chronic lower back pain. Smith (1999) used it for studying the experiences of pregnant women.

PROTOCOL ANALYSIS

"Protocols" are defined as "detailed records of behaviour during a task" (Gilhooly and Green 1996). In practice, this method is an analysis of individuals thinking aloud during a particular task. For example, the participants are asked to solve a problem and speak their thoughts as they do it. A comparison could be made, then, between the expert and the novice doing the same task (eg: Gilhooly et al 1988).

This is a method used in cognitive, educational, and social psychology (Green 1995).

Footnotes

1. The British Psychological Society (BPS) has come back to qualitative methods a number of times in its magazine, "The Psychologist" (eg: Gillett 1995; Henwood and Nicolson 1995; Sherrard 1997; Stevenson and Cooper 1997; Cooper and Stevenson 1998; Johnson 1999).

2. Henwood (1996) distinguished three strands of qualitative research in terms of their compatibility to quantitative research:

Strand I - using principles of quantitative research, like reliability and validity, with qualitative research. These methods (eg: content analysis) easily combine both qualitative and quantitative research;

Strand II - "firmly grounded in participants' own accounts"; less compatible with quantitative methods;

Strand III - focus upon the functions of language in constructing "social reality" (eg: discourse analysis); little compatibility with quantitative research, particularly because of underlying philosophical differences (realism-relativism).

While Stevenson and Cooper (1997) attempted to find a middle ground between quantitative and qualitative methods in that there is a "world out there" which can be known in part, and some reports about it are better than others.

3. Willig (2001) had her doubts about the compatibility of some qualitative and quantitative methods: "In one case, the account may be assumed to give expression to the participant's mental processes (eg: thoughts, memories, perceptions), while in the other, it may be seen to demonstrate the deployment of discursive resources in the pursuit of a particular social objective" (p81).

4. The distinction between quantitative and qualitative methods can be made among a number of lines: realism/relativism, and positivism/hermeneutics. Realism is where "something can be known independent of the knower, that its 'reality' has little, if anything, to do with the knower's process of coming to know that reality" (Sciarra 1999 p39), and relativism is the possibility of multiple constructed realities (Wetherell and Still 1996).

Positivism is where "social relations are to be regarded as 'facts', 'things' to be investigated in an object-like manner" (Sciarra 1999), and hermeneutics is "the practice of interpreting the meaning of text"

(Rennie 1999).

Table 4 highlights some of the main differences between quantitative and qualitative research.

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH	QUALITATIVE RESEARCH
- one true reality, measurable	- multiple realities, socially constructed, and context dependent
- deductive	- inductive
- theory driven	- theory generating
- understanding laws and causes	- description
- third person written reports	- first person written reports

(After Ponterotto and Grieger 1999)

Table 4 - Main differences between quantitative and qualitative research.

5. Smith et al (1995) made a number of distinctions between the old and new paradigms (table 5)

OLD PARADIGM	NEW PARADIGM
- measuring, counting, predicting	- understanding, describing
- causation	- meaning
- objective	- subjective
- universals	- specifics
- reductionist	- holistic

Table 5 - Five main differences between old and new paradigms in psychology.

6. Coolican (1994) included the clinical method ("to some extent"), and role-play and simulation ("depending on particular research").

7. Harding (1991) distinguished between strong and weak objectivity. The latter, she used for modern science, and is knowledge that claims to have no context. While strong objectivity is knowledge achieved through reflexivity; ie: an awareness of the cultural and historical context.

8. Sciarra (1999) noted differences in the role of the researcher in qualitative and quantitative research (table 6).

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH	QUALITATIVE RESEARCH
- onlooker	- actor (becoming part of the participant's world)
- expert	- learner ("a person who wants to know what it is like to be them" Bogdan and Biklen 1992)
- detachment	- involvement
- underrapport	- overrapport (emotional overinvolvement with participants eg Dunn (1991), studying battered women, admitted to experiencing the same symptoms and behaviours as her participants)

Table 6 - Role of the researcher in quantitative and qualitative research.

9. But it could end up a counselling interview (King 1996).

10. Montero (2000) quoted sources that suggested action research was used before that in 1926 and 1933.

11. Participatory action research has been developed in Latin America by Fals Borda in the 1960s and 1970s to include adult education, scientific research, and political action (Montero 2000). While "practice research", another variation, has origins in Germany in the 1970s (Nissen 2000).

12. Oakley (1998) discussed the possibility of feminist quantitative methods.

13. Acker et al (1991) defined "feminist" as "those who see women as exploited, devalued and oppressed, who are committed to changing this, and who consequently adopt a critical perspective towards dominant intellectual traditions that have ignored or justified women's oppression" (pp150-1).

14. Epistemology means the nature of knowledge and of understanding the world. There may be feminist epistemologies (Willig 2001).

15. On the front cover of this book, the authors are Phillips and Jorgensen, but inside, it Jorgensen and Phillips.

16. The use of discourse analysis in psychology has developed a lot in recent years, and has its own journals (eg: "Discourse and Society"). For those involved, there are a number of key debates:

a) Does anything exist outside of discourse? Edwards et al (1995) argued not in what has become known as the "death and furniture" debate. Even death and furniture (ie: physical realities) are discursive constructions.

b) Should discourse analysis be seen as taking a relativist position (eg: Potter 1998) or a critical realist stance (eg: Parker 1998).

17. The origins of discourse analysis in linguistics is usually seen as Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) study of classroom interactions.

18. Potter (1996b) noted twelve different "construction" approaches in psychology, including ethnomethodology, feminist studies, symbolic interactionism, and discourse analysis. Generally all the approaches share three characteristics: their opposition to traditional science; the construction of behaviour; and the importance of language and discourse in the construction process.

19. Jorgensen and Phillips (2002) divided discursive psychology into three strands:

i) a Foucauldian post-structuralist perspective (eg: Parker 1992);

ii) an interactionist perspective based on conversational analysis and ethnomethodology (eg: Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995);

iii) a synthetic perspective combining (i) and (ii) (eg: Potter and Wetherell 1987).

20. Parker (1992b) explored the use of this type of discourse analysis, and it has been suggested that he adapted the ideas enough to produce "Parkerian discourse analysis" (eg: Parker and Bolton Discourse Network 1999).

21. Wetherell (1998) argued for an integration of these two approaches to discourse analysis.

22. Other approaches to discourse analysis include:

i) Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory (1985) - this type of discourse analysis is also based on post-structuralist ideas. For them, discourse constructs the social world, but because of the instability of language, meaning can never be permanently fixed. In other words, meanings are fluid and changeable;

ii) Fairclough (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) - This approach is more common in linguistics and investigates change using the concept of intertextuality. This is the process of one text drawing upon other texts and discourses (ie: already existing meanings) (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002). Thus discourse is seen as one among many aspects of social practice.

Discourse analysis is also used to mean the analysis of relations between sentences and statements in linguistics (eg: Brown and Yule 1983), or to mean the ways people apply mental categorisation to understand narratives (van Dijk and Kintch 1983).

23. There is no general agreement about what "discourse(s)" means. For Foucault (1969) discourses are "practices that systematically form the objects of which we speak". Jorgensen and Phillips (2002) preferred to see discourses as "a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)".

Parker (1992) called them a "system of statements which construct an object", while for Potter and Wetherell (1987), they are "historically developing linguistic practices". Though the latter authors would rather use "interpretative repertoires" than discourses.

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